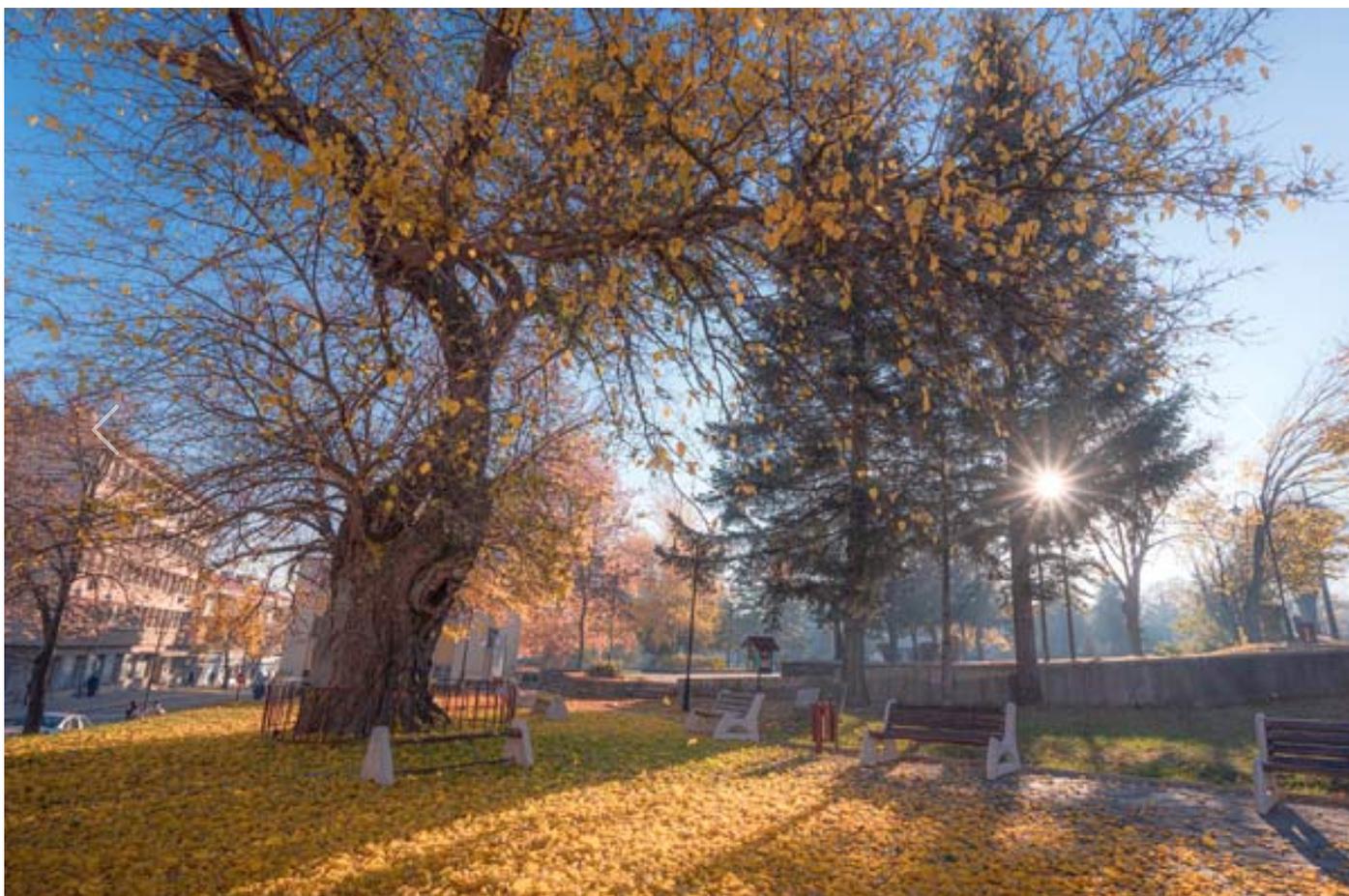


The trees tell of past events and human destinies

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Which tree will be the European Tree of 2021?

The “European Tree of the Year” contest is being held for the 11th consecutive year. The life of a tree often gathers the stories of different generations and, as a peaceful witness not only to the seasons but also to the changes in the life around it, tells in an engaging way of past events and human destinies. The Old Mulberry (Morus Alba L.), about 450 years old, from Veliki Preslav represents Bulgaria in this year’s contest. The voting takes place from 1 February to 28 February 2021. The results will be announced on 17 March 2021.

The Old Mulberry in Veliki Preslav – the Bulgarian candidate in the “European Tree of the Year 2021” contest

Deep are the roots of the Old Mulberry rising in the centre of Veliki Preslav. For nearly 450 years it has been a silent witness to suffering and joy. It remembers Levski, Stefan Karadjia, the welcoming of Ivan Vazov as an honoured guest of the town.

In those dark times of Ottoman rule, exactly opposite the konak stood the local tavern, in whose yard the mulberry was planted, probably personally by Midhat Pasha himself. This Ottoman statesman is regarded as a reformer who managed to introduce a number of fiscal, economic and cultural innovations aimed at modernising the Ottoman Empire. On the initiative of Midhat Pasha the first Bulgarian agricultural school was established, today the “Obraztsov Chiflik” Institute of Agriculture and Seed Science of the Agricultural Academy.

In the collection “Preslav Legends” by Yordan Stanev, the passage of Stefan Karadzha through Preslav is described, when the voivode not only managed to escape from his pursuer Ali Efendi, but also stayed at the said tavern with the mulberry opposite the konak.

A little later, in 1900, Ivan Vazov visited Preslav and described in his travel notes his joy at being in this town and having the opportunity to bow before the capital of the great Simeon. Legend has it that Vazov’s reception took place under the mulberry in the yard of the tavern-café, then owned by Chenyo Zhekov. Here, at the place where the guest was welcomed, today there is a granite commemorative marker.

The seasons change, and the tree still stands as a guardian of the centuries, now in spring attire, now with yellow leaves. The small garden around it has long been a favourite place for meetings, rest and coolness during the summer months – under the branches of the centuries-old tree and the spray of the town fountain.

The mulberry from Veliki Preslav was nominated by Community Centre “Razvitie 1874”, town of Veliki Preslav, and is the winner of the national contest “Tree with Roots 2020”, organised by the “EcoCommunity” Foundation. So far, the mulberry from Stari Preslav has collected 24,176 votes.

“European Tree of the Year” contest

The aim of the contest is to draw attention to interesting old trees as an important natural and cultural heritage that we must value and preserve. Unlike other contests, for the “European Tree of the Year” beauty, size or age are not important, but the story and the connection with people. The search is for trees that have become part of the community. The organisers believe that the issue of protecting trees as bearers of the local spirit needs to

become the subject of an international debate. Each year, voting for the European Tree of the Year helps thousands of people to reflect on their attitude towards nature, and 14 trees with a story become objects of attention and care by the public.

The “European Tree of the Year” contest was first organised in 2011 as a continuation of the popular “Tree of the Year” contest, which has been held in the Czech Republic by the “Partnership” Foundation for many years. The European contest is the final round of the competition, in which the winners of the national contests participate. Efforts are currently being made for the contest to be held in other countries outside Europe as well.

Voting

Every year the “Environmental Partnership Association” (EPA) organises the online voting for the “European Tree of the Year” contest. The “Partnership” Foundation – Czech Republic is a member of the Association.

Electronic voting takes place from 1 February to 28 February 2021 and continues until midnight on 29 February.

When voting, do not forget to choose two trees! To avoid the national element, participants in the voting must choose two entries – in addition to their national tree, they may also cast their vote for another one of their choice.

During the last week (from 22 to 28 February) the voting is secret and the current results will not be displayed on the web pages.

In Bulgaria’s first participation in the contest in 2011, our country took second place with the 600-year-old Oriental plane tree from the village of Garmen in the Southwestern Rhodopes. The following year we ranked third with the Wishing Tree (a 700-year-old elm) near Nisovo, which unfortunately in 2013, as a result of moisture and winds, was uprooted. But the next year, 2014, the Old Elm in Sliven became the winner of the competition with 77,526 votes.

You can vote for the “European Tree of the Year 2021” **HERE**

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